

THE WINNOWING-  
FAN : POEMS ON  
THE GREAT WAR  
BY LAURENCE BINYON

ELKIN MATHEWS  
CORK STREET, W.



THE WINNOWING-FAN

BY THE SAME WRITER

ODES


LONDON VISIONS

ENGLAND AND OTHER POEMS

ETC.

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FAN : POEMS ON  
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## THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

Now in thy splendour go before us,  
Spirit of England, ardent-eyed,  
Enkindle this dear earth that bore us,  
In the hour of peril purified.

The cares we hugged drop out of vision,  
Our hearts with deeper thoughts dilate.  
We step from days of sour division  
Into the grandeur of our fate.

For us the glorious dead have striven,  
They battled that we might be free.  
We to their living cause are given ;  
We arm for men that are to be.

Among the nations nobliest chartered,  
England recalls her heritage.  
In her is that which is not bartered,  
Which force can neither quell nor cage.

10 THE FOURTH OF AUGUST

For her immortal stars are burning  
With her the hope that's never done,  
The seed that's in the Spring's returning,  
The very flower that seeks the sun.

She fights the fraud that feeds desire on  
Lies, in a lust to enslave or kill,  
The barren creed of blood and iron,  
Vampire of Europe's wasted will . . .

Endure, O Earth ! and thou, awaken,  
Purged by this dreadful winnowing-fan,  
O wronged, untameable, unshaken  
Soul of divinely suffering man.

## STRANGE FRUIT

THIS year the grain is heavy-ripe ;  
The apple shows a ruddier stripe ;  
Never berries so profuse  
Blackened with so sweet a juice  
On brambly hedges, summer-dyed.  
The yellow leaves begin to glide ;  
But Earth in careless lap-ful treasures  
Pledge of over-brimming measures,  
As if some rich unwonted zest  
Stirred prodigal within her breast.  
And now, while plenty's left uncared,  
The fruit unplucked, the sickle spared,  
Where men go forth to waste and spill,  
Toiling to burn, destroy, and kill,  
Lo, also side by side with these  
Beast-hungers, ravening miseries,  
The heart of man has brought to birth  
Splendours richer than his earth.  
Now in the thunder-hour of fate  
Each one is kinder to his mate ;  
The surly smile ; the hard forbear ;  
There's help and hope for all to share ;

## STRANGE FRUIT

And sudden visions of goodwill  
Transcending all the scope of ill  
Like a glory of rare weather  
Link us in common light together,  
A clearness of the cleansing sun,  
Where none's alone and all are one ;  
And touching each a priceless pain  
We find our own true hearts again.  
No more the easy masks deceive :  
We give, we dare, and we believe.

## THE NEW IDOL

MAGNIFICENT the Beast ! Look in the eyes  
Of the fell tiger towering on his prey,  
Beautiful in his power to pounce and slay  
And effortless in action. He denies  
All but himself. He gloats on his weak prize,  
Roaring the anger of wild breath at bay,  
Blank anger like an element whose way  
Is mere annihilation ! Terrible eyes !

But there is one more to be feared, who can  
Escape the prison of his own wrath ; whose will  
Lives beyond life ; who smiles with quiet lips ;  
Most terrible because most tender, Man,—  
Not only uncowed but irresistible  
When the cause fires him to the finger-tips.

## THE HARVEST

RED reapers under these sad August skies,  
Proud War-Lords, careless of ten thousand dead,  
Who leave earth's kindly crops unharvested  
As you have left the kindness of the wise  
For brutal menace and for clumsy lies,  
The spawn of insolence by bragging fed,  
With power and fraud in faith's and honour's  
    stead,  
Accounting these but good stupidities ;

You reap a heavier harvest than you know.  
Disnaturing a nation, you have thieved  
Her name, her patient genius, while you thought  
To fool the world and master it. You sought  
Reality. It comes in hate and woe.  
In the end you also shall not be deceived.

## TO THE BELGIANS

O RACE that Cæsar knew,  
That won stern Roman praise,  
What land not envies you  
The laurel of these days ?

You built your cities rich  
Around each towered hall,—  
Without, the statued niche,  
Within, the pictured wall.

Your ship-thronged wharves, your marts  
With gorgeous Venice vied.  
Peace and her famous arts  
Were yours : though tide on tide

Of Europe's battle scourged  
Black field and reddened soil,  
From blood and smoke emerged  
Peace and her fruitful toil.



## TO THE BELGIANS

Yet when the challenge rang,  
"The War-Lord comes ; give room !"  
Fearless to arms you sprang  
Against the odds of doom.

Like your own Damian  
Who sought that lepers' isle  
To die a simple man  
For men with tranquil smile,

So strong in faith you dared  
Defy the giant, scorn  
Ignobly to be spared,  
Though trampled, spoiled, and torn,

And in your faith arose  
And smote, and smote again,  
Till those astonished foes  
Reeled from their mounds of slain,

The faith that the free soul,  
Untaught by force to quail,  
Through fire and dirge and dole  
Prevails and shall prevail.

## TO THE BELGIANS

17

Still for your frontier stands  
The host that knew no dread,  
Your little, stubborn land's  
Nameless, immortal dead.

## LOUVAIN

*To Dom Bruno Destrée, O.S.B.*

## I

It was the very heart of Peace that thrilled  
In the deep minster-bell's wide-throbbing sound  
When over old roofs evening seemed to build  
Security this world has never found.

Your cloister looked from Cæsar's rampart, high  
O'er the fair city : clustered orchard-trees  
Married their murmur with the dreaming sky.  
It was the house of love and living peace.

And there we talked of youth's delightful years  
In Italy, in England. Now, O Friend,  
I know not if I speak to living ears  
Or if upon you too is come the end.

Peace is on Louvain ; dead peace of spilt blood  
Upon the mounded ashes where she stood.

## II

But from that blood, those ashes there arose  
Not hoped-for terror cowering as it ran,  
But divine anger flaming upon those  
Defamers of the very name of man,

Abortions of their blind hyena-creed,  
Who for " protection " of their battle-host  
Against the unarmed of them they had made to  
    bleed,  
Whose hearts they had tortured to the utter-  
    most

Without a cause, past pardon, fired and tore  
The towers of fame and beauty, while they shot  
And butchered the defenceless in the door.  
But History shall hang them high, to rot

Unburied, in the face of times unborn,  
Mankind's abomination and last scorn.

## TO GOETHE

GOETHE, who saw and who foretold  
A world revealed  
New-springing from its ashes old  
On Valmy field,

When Prussia's sullen hosts retired  
Before the advance  
Of ragged, starved, but freedom-fired  
Soldiers of France ;

If still those clear, Olympian eyes  
Through smoke and rage  
Your ancient Europe scrutinize,  
What think you, Sage ?

Are these the armies of the Light  
That seek to drown  
The light of lands where freedom's fight  
Has won renown ?

Will they blot also out your name  
Because you praise  
All works of men that shrine the flame  
Of beauty's ways,

Wherever men have proved them great,  
Nor, drunk with pride,  
Saw but a single swollen State  
And naught beside,

Nor dreamed of drilling Europe's mind  
With threat and blow  
The way professors have designed  
Genius should go ?

Or shall a people rise at length  
And see and shake  
The fetters from its giant strength,  
And grandly break

This pedantry of feud and force  
To man untrue  
Thundering and blundering on its course  
To death and rue ?

## AT RHEIMS

THEIR hearts were burning in their breasts  
 Too hot for curse or cries.  
 They stared upon the towers that burned  
 Before their smarting eyes.

There where, since France began to be,  
 Anointed kings knelt down,  
 There where the Maid, the unafraid,  
 Received her vision's crown,

The senseless shell with nightmare scream  
 Burst, and fair fragments fell  
 Torn from their centuries of peace  
 As by the rage of hell.

What help for wrath, what use for wail ?  
 Before a dumb despair  
 All ancient, high, heroic France  
 Seemed burning, bleeding there.

. . . . .



Within, the pillars soar to gloom  
Lit by the glimmering Rose ;  
Spirits of beauty shrined in stone  
Afar from mortal woes,

Hearing not, though their haunted shade  
Is stricken, and all around  
With splintering flash and brutal crash  
The ghostly aisles resound.

And there, upon the pavement stretched,  
The German wounded groan  
To see the dropping flames of death  
And feel the shells their own.

Too fierce the fire ! Helped by their foes  
They stagger out to air.  
The green-gray coats are seen, are known  
Through all the crowded square.

. . . . .

Ah, now for vengeance ! Deep the groan :  
A death-knell ! Quietly  
Soldiers unsling their rifles, lift  
And aim with steady eye.

But sudden in the hush between  
Death and the doomed, there stands  
Against those levelled guns a priest,  
Gentle, with outstretched hands.

*Be not as guilty as they !* he cries . . .  
Each lets his weapon fall,  
As if a vision showed him France  
And vengeance vain and small.

## TO THE ENEMY COMPLAINING

BE ruthless, then ; scorn slaves of scruple ; avow  
The blow, planned with such patience, that you  
deal

So terribly ; hack on, and care not how  
The innocent fall ; live out your faith of steel.

Then you speak speech that we can comprehend.  
It cries from the unpitied blood you spill.  
And so we stand against you, and to the end  
Flame as one man, the weapon of one will.

But when your lips usurp the loyal phrase  
Of honour, querulously voluble  
Of " chivalry " and " kindness," and you praise  
What you despise for weakness of the fool,

Then the gorge rises. Bleat to dupe the dead !  
The wolf beneath the sheepskin drips too red.

## TO WOMEN

YOUR hearts are lifted up, your hearts  
That have foreknown the utter price.  
Your hearts burn upward like a flame  
Of splendour and of sacrifice.

For you, you too, to battle go,  
Not with the marching drums and cheers  
But in the watch of solitude  
And through the boundless night of fears.

Swift, swifter than those hawks of war,  
Those threatening wings that pulse the air,  
Far as the vanward ranks are set,  
You are gone before them, you are there !

And not a shot comes blind with death  
And not a stab of steel is pressed  
Home, but invisibly it tore  
And entered first a woman's breast.

Amid the thunder of the guns,  
The lightnings of the lance and sword  
Your hope, your dread, your throbbing pride,  
Your infinite passion is outpoured

From hearts that are as one high heart  
Withholding naught from doom and bale  
Burningly offered up,—to bleed,  
To bear, to break, but not to fail !

## FOR THE FALLEN

WITH proud thanksgiving, a mother for her  
children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea.  
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her  
spirit,  
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and  
royal  
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were  
young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and  
aglow.  
They were staunch to the end against odds  
uncounted,  
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow  
old :

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades  
again ;

They sit no more at familiar tables of home ;

They have no lot in our labour of the day-time ;

They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,  
found,

Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,

To the innermost heart of their own land they  
are known

As the stars are known to the Night ;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are  
dust

Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,

As the stars that are starry in the time of our  
darkness,

To the end, to the end, they remain.



## ODE FOR SEPTEMBER

## I

ON that long day when England held her breath,  
Suddenly gripped at heart  
And called to choose her part  
Between her loyal soul and luring sophistries,  
We watched the wide, green-bosomed land  
    beneath  
Driven and tumultuous skies ;  
We watched the volley of white shower after  
    shower  
Desolate with fierce drops the fallen flower ;  
And still the rain's retreat  
Drew glory on its track,  
And still, when all was darkness and defeat,  
Upon dissolving cloud the bow of peace shone  
    back.  
So in our hearts was alternating beat,  
With very dread elate ;  
And Earth dyed all her day in colours of our  
    fate.

## II

But oh, how faint the image we foretold  
In fancies of our fear  
Now that the truth is here !  
And we awake from dream yet think it still a  
dream.  
It bursts our thoughts with more than thought  
can hold ;  
And more than human seem  
These agonies of conflict ; Elements  
At war ! yet not with vast indifference  
Casually crushing ; nay,  
It is as if were hurled  
Lightnings that murdered, seeking out their  
prey ;  
As if an earthquake shook to chaos half the  
world,  
Equal in purpose as in power to slay ;  
And thunder stunned our ears  
Streaming in rain of blood on torrents that are  
tears.

## III

Around a planet rolls the drum's alarm.  
Far where the summer smiles  
Upon the utmost isles,  
Danger is treading silent as a fever-breath.  
Now in the North the secret waters arm ;  
Under the wave is Death :  
They fight in the very air, the virgin air,  
Hovering on fierce wings to the onset : there  
Nations to battle stream ;  
Earth smokes and cities burn ;  
Heaven thickens in a storm of shells that scream;  
The long lines shattering break, turn and again  
return ;  
And still across a continent they teem,  
Moving in myriads ; more  
Than ranks of flesh and blood, but soul with  
soul at war !

## IV

All the hells are awake : the old serpents hiss  
From dungeons of the mind ;  
Fury of hate born blind,  
Madness and lust, despairs and treacheries un-  
clean ;

They shudder up from man's most dark abyss.  
But there are heavens serene  
That answer strength with strength ; they  
stand secure ;

They arm us from within, and we endure.  
Now are the brave more brave,  
Now is the cause more dear,  
The more the tempests of the darkness rave  
As, when the sun goes down, the shining stars  
are clear.

Radiant the spirit rushes to the grave.  
Glorious it is to live  
In such an hour, but life is lovelier yet to give.

## v

Alas ! what comfort for the uncomforted,  
Who knew no cause, nor sought  
Glory or gain ? they are taught,  
Homeless in homes that burn, what human  
    hearts can bear.

The children stumble over their dear dead,  
Wandering they know not where.  
And there is one who simply fights, obeys,  
Tramps, till he loses count of nights and days,  
Tired, mired in dust and sweat,  
Far from his own hearth-stone ;  
A common man of common earth, and yet  
The battle-winner he, a man of no renown,  
Where " food for cannon " pays a nation's  
    debt.

This is Earth's hero, whom  
The pride of Empire tosses careless to his  
    doom.

## VI

Now will we speak, while we have eyes for tears  
And fibres to be wrung  
And in our mouths a tongue.

We will bear wrongs untold but will not only  
bear ;

Not only bear, but build through striving years  
The answer of our prayer,

That whosoever has the noble name

Of man, shall not be yoked to alien shame ;

That life shall be indeed

Life, not permitted breath

Of spirits wrenched and forced to others' need,  
Robbed of their nature's joy and free alone in  
death,

The world shall travail in that cause, shall bleed,

But deep in hope it dwells

Until the morning break which the long night  
foretells.

## VII

O children filled with your own airy glee  
Or with a grief that comes  
So swift, so strange, it numbs,  
If on your growing youth this page of terror bite,  
Harden not then your senses, feel and be  
The promise of the light.  
O heirs of Man, keep in your hearts not less  
The divine torrents of his tenderness !  
'Tis ever war : but rust  
Grows on the sword ; the tale  
Of earth is strewn with empires heaped in dust  
Because they dreamed that force should punish  
and prevail.  
The will to kindness lives beyond their lust ;  
Their grandeurs are undone :  
Deep, deep within man's soul are all his vic-  
tories won.



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